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ABSTRACT

This book explains how and why education research has come to suffer from its low-status reputation. Starting with the establishment of education as a distinct discipline, the book shows how the field, in a misguided attempt to be "scientific," turned away from the holistic and deeply social and pragmatic vision of John Dewey. It portrays the major players (including Dewey and William James), the institutions, and the conflicts that have shaped the study of education. It discusses topics such as curriculum studies and the panic over the Soviet Union's Sputnik, school surveys and testing movements, and the increasing role of the federal government in education. Education research, the book argues, took a wrong turn when it abandoned Dewey's pragmatic vision for an emphasis on quantitative measurement and behaviorally oriented visions of what education should be. Its critical look back at the abandonment of Dewey's ideals and its consequences reveals much about the current state of education research. The book takes the reader into the last half of the 20th century, when the federal government came to see education research as a tool for increasing equality. It argues that its requirements for program evaluation resulted in an improved understanding of the education policy-making process, yet these evaluations provided grist for the mill for the Reagan administration, which slashed federal funding to education research just as it had begun to mature. The book also considers the promising directions education research may be taking in the future. (Each chapter includes extensive notes.) (BT)

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